CONCLUSION

In reflecting on the developments in Rocky Mountain National Park during half a century, it becomes evident that its administrative history has been marked by the efforts of fallible but dedicated officials to weigh the demands of the public against the imperatives of nature. The successive superintendents and their staffs have been tested by the challenge of educating the public to the appreciation and enjoyment of a great scenic area in its ages-old, primitive state. They have shared in what President John F. Kennedy called "our primary task . . . to increase our understanding of our environment to a point where we can enjoy it without defacing it. . ." [1] In some instances their efforts mirrored those of administrators in other national parks, and indeed, the transfer of officials from one park to another caused them to encounter similar problems in two or more assignments.

The early history of Rocky Mountain Park was sometimes characterized by administrative inexperience. For example, the Park's first superintendents lacked training in public relations and did little to further an appreciation of the "Park Idea." And L. C. Way, especially, was hard pressed to deal effectively with the controversies of his administration. But it should be added that the Park Service itself added to Way's problems. In short, during the initial period, no official, not even National Parks Director Stephen Mather, had been prepared to meet the problems of Park administration. This pervasive handicap, coupled with parsimonious appropriations provided by a niggardly Congress, resulted in inadequate financing and staffing.

The Park Service policy of granting concession monopolies, without open bidding, turned the minds of many Coloradans against national parks in general and L. C. Way in particular. As a result, battle lines were already drawn when the first professional superintendent, Roger Toll, arrived on the scene. Then even the skillful Toll did not remove doubts in the minds of local residents, as well as other Coloradans, of the trustworthiness of the Park Service. Neither Toll nor Assistant Parks Director Arno Cammerer objected to the appointment of the legal representative of the transportation company to assist the government in the Colorado vs. Toll legal struggle. To some critics this act further muddied the waters and seemed to justify the linking of the transportation company and the Park Service in a clandestine partnership.

In the jurisdictional controversy, the fear of federal encroachment on states rights was added, particularly by certain Colorado editors, to the personal animosities against Park Service policies and officials. The fact that Arkansas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Montana, Washington, and Oregon had already ceded jurisdiction over their national parks mattered

little to the Park's critics. Support for the ceding from the Rocky Mountain News and the entire Colorado congressional delegation left many unconvinced. Then, too, the Park Service's threat of cutting off road-building appropriations, if ceding did not occur, tended to inflame feelings.

Through these early controversies the implementing of Park Service policies often engendered negative responses from suspicious people. In contrast, the building of Trail Ridge Road—ironically made possible by the appropriations originally withheld in the jurisdiction controversy—might well be considered a turning point in the administrative history of Rocky Mountain. The construction of this road in the face of its attendant hazards captured the imagination of the public. This engineering achievement was an outstanding example of how the Park administrators could accomplish something for the local people. The road also attracted tourists to the Park, a fact of special significance to the nearby communities during the depression days of the 1930's.

During those days, Rocky Mountain Park became host to several of the thirty-two Civilian Conservation Corps camps located in Colorado. Under the leadership of the United States Army and the National Park Service the CCC was an unqualified success. Enrollees maintained hundreds of miles of trails, constructed roads and parking lots, and manned information stations as part of their multiple contributions to fulfillment of the plans of Superintendent Edmund Rogers and his staff. The surrounding communities benefitted financially as enrollees and support personnel spent a percentage of their salaries at local establishments.

About the same time, however, another government agency, the Bureau of Reclamation, encroached upon the Park's area of jurisdiction. The building of the Colorado-Big Thompson diversion project pointed up the clash of two imperatives, the need for water on the eastern plains and the restrictions imposed by Park Service philosophy. In this struggle the economic imperative won. Despite the opposition by conservation societies, the Park Service, the Secretary of the Interior, and Rocky Mountain officials, the east to west water diversion tunnel was built. The Park Service's philosophical armor proved not strong enough when faced with the popular clamor for more water on the eastern slope and a far more powerful rival bureau.

The opposition of the Park Service to the reclamation project inflamed local critics. As a result, proposals to enlarge Park boundaries received short shrift in valley town meetings. Superintendents Thomas Allen and David Canfield with officials of the Forest Service tried unsuccessfully to gain support of the miners and cattle men for the changes. Not even the exceptional public relations skills of Canfield could budge Park opponents. Therefore, the Arapahoe peaks region south of the present Park boundaries subsequently remained outside of national park protection.

Meanwhile, the Park staff confronted the increasingly serious problem of wildlife management. Officials discovered that they had been protecting the native animals too well. Vigorous predator control campaigns in the 1920's had all but eradicated the natural enemies of the deer and elk. By the 1930's L. C. Way's earlier boasts of the plentifulness of wildlife

had given way to the warnings of Edmund Rogers concerning the deterioration of the range. Faced with killing the very game the Park was created to protect, officials first tried alternatives to shooting. However, the purchase of additional range and the use of check plots eased but did not solve the problem. Therefore the Park Service undertook a reduction campaign in the mid-1940's, preceding it with an educational campaign. Perhaps the Service could be criticized for not trying this method of control sooner, especially since a similar problem had existed earlier in the Yellowstone and Grand Canyon areas. But the Park Service correctly realized that any solution involved not only wildlife, but also the delicate factor of public relations. To the present time (1968), problems of wildlife management and public relations still exist in Rocky Mountain National Park. The grudging acceptance, however, from the Estes Park Trail, of the reduction campaign represented a real victory for the Park's administrators.

The growth in sophistication and size of the Park's Department of Interpretation is one phase of Park policy approved by visitors and local editors from its inception in 1918. Still, the success of the naturalist programs has been, in a way, self-defeating. Too many visitors have taken advantage of the programs for the Park Service to be able to serve them effectively. To accommodate growing crowds, Superintendents Canfield and James Lloyd initiated changes in their naturalist schedules without subverting the traditional interpretive premise of enabling visitors "to understand and appreciate what they saw." [2] Instituting shorter hikes and information trailers seemed a far cry from Perley Smoll's intimate walks and talks. On balance though, the interpretive program—especially in the work done by the seasonal ranger-naturalists—has been successful in meeting the needs of the tourists.

Rocky Mountain's problems with winter sports development stemmed from several sources. Park Service philosophy maintained that all outdoor sports, including winter sports, should be encouraged. Also, Stephen Mather believed that to get appropriations from a parsimonious Congress he had to publicize the recreational potential of the Park System. Mather's successor, Horace Albright, contended that visitors should be allowed to use their parks to the fullest. As a result, ski lifts were eventually built in Mt. Rainier, Sequoia, Yosemite, Lassen Volcanic and Olympic national parks. To implement these directives in Rocky Mountain, without marring the scenery, became the special problem of more than one superintendent. The concern of Superintendents Allen and Canfield for the natural wonders of the area appeared to be vacillation by those sportsmen eager to "develop" the winter sports potential of the Park, while to purists, the fact that a winter sports complex was built at all gave evidence of Park Service appeasement to local political pressures.

As in several other Parks, Rocky Mountain officials have been bothered by the presence of inholdings and campgrounds. The existence of both was considered ecologically unsound, since the environment of wildlife became irrevocably altered. Thus it was a sound practice to buy out privately developed lands in the Park. To replace them with campgrounds was, however, philosophically obtuse. Yet, at the same time, the policy was politically realistic. Pressures from politicians and chambers of commerce demanding more campgrounds, more roads and more trails were continued to be an ever-present concern to the administrators at Rocky Mountain.

In eliminating most concessioners from within this national park, Superintendents Lloyd and Allyn Hanks dealt with arguments more emotional than thoughtful. Automobile travel had already greatly changed the character of concessions required by the public. No longer could hotels within the Park compete profitably with campgrounds within and motels without the Park's boundaries. Therefore, by condemning concession properties the Park Service was carrying out an economically merciful practice. Yet, had it not been for the persistence and tact of Superintendent Hanks, this successful Park policy would have been blunted by ugly controversies. Largely because of Hanks and his skilled and patient staff the concession problems have been eliminated from Park boundaries and most private inholdings have amicably been removed.

In carrying out their tasks, those who administered the Park have been men of compromise in the highest sense. They have also been educators in the broadest sense by informing a generally ignorant public of the values of a Park experience, an experience unique with intangible riches. The compromising goes on and with it the need for education. As Freeman Tilden once wrote,

> This scheme of land use, so far removed from the average person's economic experience, may glancingly seem strange and remote. And so it is. It is a new theory in the world, of management of the public land for a superior kind of pleasure and profit; for the perpetuation of the country's natural and historic heritage, untarnished by invasion and depletion other than that of invincible time. No wonder, then, that it is a difficult story to tell. [3]

An assessment of the meaning or significance of the administrative history of Rocky Mountain National Park will be seen in better perspective when comparably detailed studies have been prepared on other national parks. Nevertheless in furnishing but one example of the effort to implement the new theory of management of the public lands for the perpetuation of the country's natural heritage through government control and supervision, Rocky Mountain gives the basis for a few observations. Significantly, the National Park Service through its officials at Rocky Mountain has had to bend its philosophy to meet the changing demands of the public. It is an agency sensitive to popular pressures. Fortunately, within the Park Service's dual philosophical imperative there is room for experimentation and growth. Still many problems—such as those concerning wildlife—have remained ongoing, not defying solution but demanding continual re-evaluation. The successful administering of Rocky Mountain Park has often depended more on the personalities of the officials on the scene than the judgments made by an elaborate bureaucracy in a regional office. Perhaps most importantly the history of this Park has proven that government supervision can be effective in achieving the broad objectives of making available to an ever larger clientele, safe, convenient and rewarding opportunities for contacts with nature.

Statistically Rocky Mountain National Park is not the most impressive of the national parks. It is neither the largest nor the most heavily visited. Furthermore its scenic qualities likely fall short of those of other parks. Therefore this Park's ultimate significance rests in the significance of the entire Park System.

> A National Park is a fountain of life. . . . Without parks and outdoor life all that is best in civilization will be smothered. To save our selves—to enable us to live at our best and happiest, parks are necessary. Within National Parks is room— glorious room—room in which to find ourselves, in which to think and hope to dream and plan, to rest, and resolve. [4]

For over a half century Rocky Mountain Park has provided such room and therefore has offered its own reason for being.

ENDNOTES

1. Editors of Country Beautiful Magazine, America The Beautiful: In the Words of John F. Kennedy (New York, 1964), p. 24.

2. Ise, Our National Park Policy, p. 360.

3. Freeman Tilden, The National Parks: What They Mean To You And Me (New York, 1951), p. 13.

4. Enos A. Mills, Your National Parks (Boston, 1927), p. 379.